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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire concerning educational and employment activities of the 1972 graduates of Bucks County Community College (BCCC) was mailed to all 645 Associate of Arts degree recipients. Responses were elicited from 436 (68 percent). Graduates' evaluations of their BCCC experience were also solicited. Sixty-nine percent entered BCCC directly from high school; 78 percent held some form of part-time employment while at BCCC, and 56 percent worked at least 16 hours a week. Twenty-three percent changed their major at least once. In spite of the large percentage of working students and the fact that almost a quarter of the class switched majors, 62 percent were still able to graduate in four semesters or less, excluding summer sessions. Upon graduation, 41 percent transferred directly to another educational institution as full-time students, and 35 percent full-time employment. The remaining graduates divided themselves among various combinations of employment, student, military, and housewife duties. The vast majority had no problems in finding employment or transferring to another school. Most employed graduates were fairly well satisfied with their current positions. Ninety-nine percent of BCCC graduates expressed an interest in continuing their education. (AM)

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BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

of

BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRADUATES

1972

OFFICE of INSTITUTIONAL
RESEARCH

BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940

DECEMBER, 1974

JC 750 141

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I. GRADUATES OF BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, 1967-1972 1

FOREWORD

Bucks County Community College enrolled its first students in September, 1965. During the seven years from September, 1965, through September, 1972, 2151 students earned an associate degree at Bucks County Community College. During 1972 alone, 645 students graduated from Bucks.

This study was undertaken in recognition of the continuing need of this College to provide productivity data regarding the post-graduation educational and employment activities of our graduates. A second purpose was to provide former students an opportunity to evaluate the College's programs and services.

This study would not have been possible without the complete cooperation of staff and faculty personnel who supported the development of systematic follow-ups of graduates. Special appreciation is expressed to Mrs. Evelyn Groom for providing the necessary computer support to handle the data available and to Mrs. Nancy Andreacchio for the typing of this final report.

This survey will have been a benefit to the College if the information presented and analyzed will serve as another step in the continuous process of institutional self-evaluation. It is primarily from the students who have attended this College that one can learn its strengths and its weaknesses in order to plan for the future.

JACK MAHON

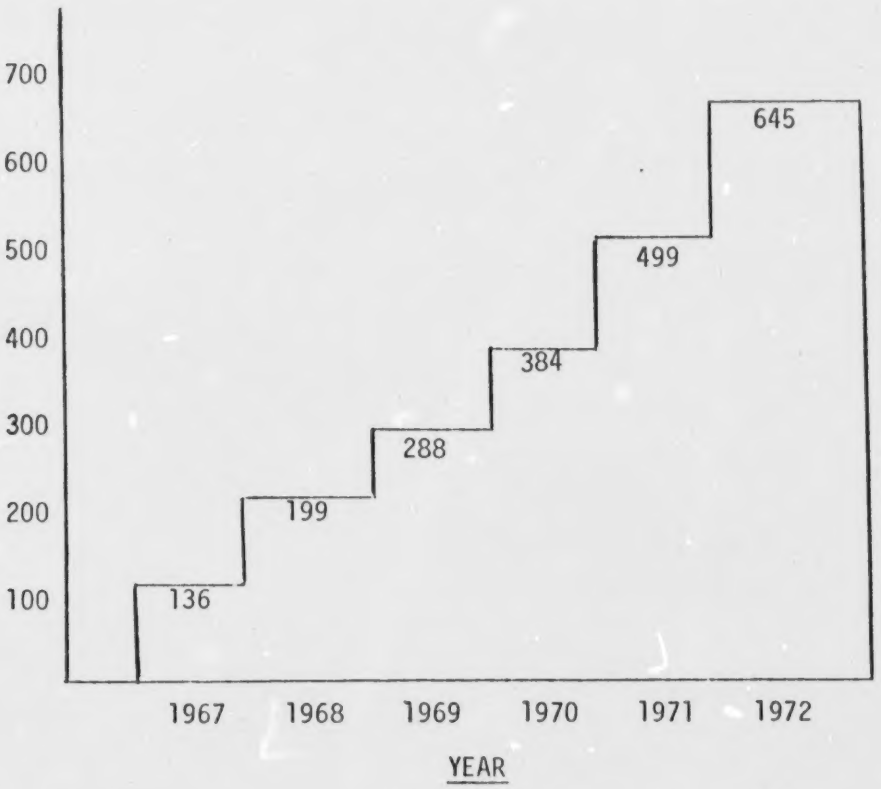
Assistant to the President

INTRODUCTION

During the 1972 calendar year 645 students earned the Associate of Arts Degree at Bucks County Community College. As can be seen from Figure I, this indicates an increase of approximately 150 graduates from 1971.

FIGURE I

Graduates of Bucks County Community College, 1967-1972



While students attend community colleges for a variety of reasons - to take a course for personal enrichment, to pursue a particular career, to transfer to a four year college or to make better use of one's leisure time - the traditional criterion for measuring the success or failure of an educational institution has been its graduates. While a study of the post-graduation

patterns of an institution's graduates should not be viewed as conclusive evidence to either the success or failure of that institution, it is a critical source of information in that it provides this College and its various departments and offices with necessary feedback from those who have had the opportunity to utilize the knowledge and skills developed at Bucks County Community College in further formal education and career opportunities.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this follow-up was to provide descriptive information concerning the educational and employment patterns of the 1972 graduates from Bucks County Community College. In addition, this survey elicited evaluative reactions from the graduates in order to improve the academic, administrative and student services.

Specifically, this follow-up study sought reliable information which could be used for the following:

1. to provide current information on the educational and employment patterns of Bucks County Community College graduates
2. to determine how effectively the College is meeting the educational and career needs of its students
3. to provide feedback from graduates on how the Bucks County Community College experience could be improved

Procedure

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed in early 1972. It was field tested using College employees who had graduated from one of the College's programs. Each student was contacted twice by mail. Each mailing included the questionnaire, a cover letter (Appendix B) and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope.

The analyses of the data was accomplished by Mrs. Evelyn Groom and consisted of item tallies for the total sample on the entire questionnaire.

Questionnaire Return Information

There were 645 graduates from Bucks County Community College during 1972. All of these individuals were contacted twice by mail. Replies were received from 436 or 68 per cent. The results indicated in the following pages were gained from these 436 replies.

RESULTS

Student Characteristics

In order to serve as a comprehensive community college, the institution must be visible to all adult citizens in its service area and must have a sufficient breadth and depth of curricular offerings to persuade these individuals to enroll. The heavy reliance of Bucks County Community College on high school seniors to fill the classrooms during its early years is readily seen by Table I. Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of the 1972 graduates entered Bucks County Community College directly from high school. The effect of the Viet Nam conflict is very much in evidence with eight per cent enrolling shortly after serving their military obligation. Another 11 per cent entered the College after working for a period of time. The five per cent who transferred to Bucks County Community College after attending another institution of higher education can be expected to increase in the coming years. The majority of those indicating "other" were either housewives who enrolled at the College to start their "second career" or individuals who had traveled for a year or two after completing high school.

TABLE I

Status Upon Entering Bucks County Community College

STATUS	N	PER CENT
Entered directly from high school	300	69%
Entered shortly after military service	34	8%
Entered after working for a period of time	49	11%
Transferred from a community/junior college	6	1%
Transferred from a four-year institution	17	4%
Other	30	7%

Approximately four-fifths (78 per cent) of the 1972 graduates worked while attending the College. As can be seen from Table II over one-half (56 per cent) worked at least 16 hours every week, 12 per cent of whom worked over 30 hours per week. Primarily resulting from these employment patterns, less than two-thirds (62 per cent) completed their degree requirements in four semesters or less. An additional 22 per cent took 5 semesters to finish and another 16 per cent took over 5 semesters to earn the associate degree.

TABLE II

Employment Patterns of 1972 Graduates While Students

EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS	N	PER CENT
Did not work	98	22%
Less than 6 hours	8	2%
6 - 10 hours	35	8%
11 - 15 hours	53	12%
16 - 20 hours	103	24%
21 - 25 hours	65	15%
26 - 30 hours	23	5%
Over 30 hours	53	12%

Another factor involved in prolonging the time required to earn a degree is the number of times a student changes his or her academic major. Although 77 per cent of the graduates indicated that they never changed their major once enrolled, another 19 per cent changed it once and 4 per cent changed it at least twice. Each change in an academic major could delay the reception of the degree, especially if the course requirements for the new major bears little resemblance to the former major.

Post-Graduation Patterns

Institutions of higher education are continually being called upon to

provide evidence of their productivity. Very often the measures used to assess this productivity are the educational endeavors and the employment records of their graduates.

As indicated in Table III, the two major subgroups of graduates are those who continue as full-time students in another institution of higher education and those who gain full-time employment. These two groups alone account for 76 per cent of the 1972 Bucks County Community College graduates. The remaining graduates tended to divide themselves rather evenly among various combinations of employment, student, military and housewife duties. A considerable number of the "other" category indicated that they traveled the year after graduation.

TABLE III

Status Immediately after Graduating from Bucks County Community College

STATUS	N	PER CENT
Military Service	7	2%
Employed full-time	154	35%
Employed part-time	22	5%
Employed full-time/Student part-time	17	4%
Student full-time	181	41%
Student part-time	3	1%
Student part-time/Employed part-time	10	2%
Housewife	6	1%
Other	40	9%

Educational Endeavors of Respondents

The vast majority of those students who transferred to another educational institution upon graduation from Bucks County Community College did enroll at a four-year college or university. The remaining students enrolled in either employer training programs, trade or business schools or another community

or junior college.

As can be seen in Table IV, over one-half of the students who did transfer to four-year colleges did so to seven institutions of higher education within Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Obviously, there is a geographical propinquity recognizable within this listing.

TABLE IV

Most Popular Transfer Institutions

INSTITUTION	PER CENT
1. Pennsylvania State University	14%
2. Temple University	8%
3. Rider College	8%
4. Trenton State College	8%
5. East Stroudsburg State College	7%
6. Millersville State College	6%
7. West Chester State College	5%

When questioned whether or not they had experienced any difficulties in transferring, 84 per cent replied "no" and 16 per cent replied "yes". An analysis of those replying "yes" indicates that most of these students experienced some difficulty in getting all of their credits accepted. The recently signed agreement between state owned colleges and community colleges within Pennsylvania should alleviate most of these problems.

It has long been recognized that education is a lifelong process in our society and one's graduation from a community college is not necessarily the final contact an individual will have with an institution of higher education. Responses to this survey indicated that 99 per cent of the 1972 Bucks County Community College graduates plan to continue their education at either the

undergraduate or graduate level. As can be seen in Table V, the majority of these students plan to continue their education at the undergraduate level. An additional 8 per cent intend to enroll in either full-time or part-time graduate studies.

TABLE V

Plans to Continue Education

EDUCATIONAL PLANS	N	PER CENT
Full-time undergraduate	226	51%
Part-time undergraduate	175	40%
Full-time graduate	25	6%
Part-time graduate	7	2%
No Plans	7	1%

Employment Endeavors of Respondents

The other major segment of Bucks County Community College graduates who directly entered either full-time or part-time employment upon graduation also indicated a high degree of success. In times when the overriding concern of most college graduates is their ability to secure a job to begin a career, 97 per cent of the 1972 Bucks County Community College graduates who were employed on either a full-time or a part-time basis immediately after graduating from the College indicated that they did not encounter any problems in securing those positions.

While Bucks County Community College has an additional responsibility to assist its graduates in finding suitable employment, the College is also concerned with the degree of satisfaction these individuals find in their various working capacities. As indicated in Table VI, most of the 1972 graduates are fairly well satisfied with their current positions. Approximately 90 per cent of those responding indicated that, overall, they felt at least fair regarding their positions.

TABLE VI

Satisfaction with Current Position

CRITERION	*Superior*	*Good*	*Fair*	*Poor*
Challenging Work	60%	21%	15%	4%
Interesting Work	45%	26%	20%	9%
Good Relations with Colleagues	46%	31%	17%	6%
Opportunity for Advancement	51%	42%	5%	2%
Salary	33%	25%	21%	21%
Overall	27%	30%	32%	11%

Evaluation of College Experience

One of the primary purposes of this follow-up study was to provide feedback to college personnel regarding the variety of counseling services available at Bucks County Community College. In this way, these individuals or offices might have the chance to see themselves through the eyes of their clients. As indicated in Table VII, a wide vareity of counseling services were available and were utilized by the 1972 graduates. The Counseling Center staff was seen as most

TABLE VII

Sources of Counseling Helpful to 1972 Graduates

SOURCE	*Most Helpful*	*Less Helpful*	*No Help*
Placement Office	33%	49%	18%
Admissions Office	32%	25%	43%
Counseling Center Staff	42%	27%	31%
Financial Aid Office	32%	24%	44%
Academic Advisors	23%	16%	61%

helpful by 42 per cent of those responding.

The true measure of a community college's value to its students can be found in the ability of that institution to meet their educational and career objectives. Table VIII relates the responses of the 1972 Bucks County Community College graduates when asked to evaluate their programs of study and experiences at the College with their own objectives, interests and abilities. The vast majority found the College to have been at least partially successful in meeting their objectives. The ability of the College to remain as responsive in the future is critical to its continued viability.

TABLE VIII

Evaluation of Programs and Experiences at Bucks County Community College

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS & EXPERIENCES	Very Much So	Partially	Not at All
Program of Study Met Educational Objectives	20%	41%	28%
Program of Study Compatible with Interests and Abilities	63%	34%	1%
Experiences at Bucks County Community College Met Personal Objectives	63%	35%	1%
Experiences at Bucks County Community College Compatible with Current Interest and Abilities	56%	39%	4%

SUMMARY

This study was conducted primarily to determine the educational and employment activities of the 1972 graduates of Bucks County Community College. A secondary purpose was to elicit evaluative reactions from the graduates regarding the services available at the College. Of the 645 graduates from Bucks County Community College during 1972 436 or 68 per cent responded to the mailed questionnaire.

Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of the 1972 graduates entered Bucks County Community College directly from high school. The other one-third represented individuals who enrolled after working for a period of time, serving their military obligation, transferring from another institution of higher education or those wishing to start a second career, many of whom had been housewives.

While attending Bucks County Community College, 78 per cent of the graduates held some form of part-time employment with 56 per cent working at least 16 hours per week. In spite of this fact and in spite of the fact that 23 per cent of the 1972 graduates changed their academic major at least once while enrolled at this College, over three-fifths or 62 per cent were still able to graduate in four semesters or less, excluding summer sessions.

Upon graduation from Bucks County Community College, over two-fifths or 41 per cent transferred immediately into four-year colleges or universities as full-time students and 35 per cent gained full-time employment. The remaining students divided themselves among various combinations of employment, student, military and housewife duties. The vast majority of graduates experienced no problems in either transferring to another institution of higher education or in acquiring employment.

Responses to this survey indicated that 99 per cent of the 1972 Bucks County Community College graduates plan to continue their education at either the undergraduate or the graduate level. Of this 99 per cent, 8 per cent intend to enroll in graduate school.

The Counseling Center Staff was seen as the most helpful source of counseling to the 1972 graduates. The vast majority of the 1972 graduates also found the College to have been at least partially successful in meeting their personal or educational objectives.

It is hoped that these findings will benefit all areas of the College in the understanding of our students and in future directions.

APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire

BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Newtown, Pennsylvania
18940

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FOLLOW-UP OF ALL GRADUATES

ear Alumnus:

Bucks County Community College is making a concerted effort to learn about our graduates and to assess the effectiveness of our educational programs. The success of this effort will depend directly on your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

.he questionnaire is designed so that you need only respond to those statements which pertain specifically to you. This saves time and maximizes your contribution. When directed to GO TO QUESTION....proceed to that question and continue responding. Complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Your responses will be maintained in strict confidence with only group responses being reported. (Note: If the address printed on .he label is inaccurate, please correct it in the space provided.)

1. Which best describes your status when you first entered BCCC?

- ☐ Entered directly from high school.
- ☐ Entered shortly after military service.
- ☐ Entered after working for a period of time.
- ☐ Transferred from another community/junior college.
- ☐ Transferred from a four-year institution.
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

2. How many hours per week did you work while attending BCCC?

☐ Did not work	☐ 6-10 hours	☐ 16-20 hours	☐ 26-30 hours
☐ Less than 6 hours	☐ 11-15 hours	☐ 21-25 hours	☐ Over 30 hours

3. How many semesters (excluding summer sessions) were you enrolled at BCCC before receiving your degree?

☐ One ☐ Two ☐ Three ☐ Four ☐ Five ☐ Over Five

4. Did you change your major field of study while you were a student at BCCC?

☐ No ☐ Yes, once ☐ Yes, twice ☐ Yes, more than twice

5. Please check the response which indicates what your status was immediately after graduating from BCCC:

- ☐ In military service. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 6
- ☐ Employed full-time . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 12
- ☐ Employed part-time . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 12
- ☐ Student full-time. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 7
- ☐ Student part-time. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 7
- ☐ Part-time student/P-T employed . . GO TO QUESTION 7
- ☐ Housewife . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 16
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

_____
_____. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 16

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6. Branch of service: _____ Rank: _____
   Responsibility: _____
   _____
   _____ . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 16

7. What college/university did you transfer to?
   Name: _____ State: _____

8. Did you experience any difficulties in transferring?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes; (specify): _____

9. Are you currently enrolled at that institution?
   - ☐ Yes; full-time . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Yes; part-time . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ No

10. Have you graduated from that or any other institution?
   - ☐ Yes; date: _____ degree: _____ program: _____
     Institution: _____ GO TO QUESTION 16
     date: _____ degree: _____ program: _____
     Institution: _____ GO TO QUESTION 16
   - ☐ No

11. Are you enrolled full-time at another school?
   - ☐ Yes; undergraduate school . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Yes; graduate school. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ No. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 16

12. Who was your first employer after graduation?
   Name: _____ Address: _____
   Job Title: _____ _____ Zip _____

13. Did you encounter problems in securing that position?
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Yes; (specify): _____
     _____

14. Give a short job description of that position. _____
   _____
   _____

15. Are you currently employed at that position?
   - ☐ Yes. . . . GO TO QUESTION 20
   - ☐ No . . . . GO TO QUESTION 17

16. What is your current status?
   - ☐ In military service . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Employed full-time. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 17
   - ☐ Employed part-time. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 17
   - ☐ Undergraduate student full-time . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Undergraduate student part-time . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Graduate student full-time. . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Part-time student/part-time employed. . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Housewife . . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23
   - ☐ Other (specify): _____
     _____ . . . . GO TO QUESTION 23

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17. Who is your current employer?

Name: _____ Address: _____

Job Title: _____ _____ Zip

18. Give a short job description of your position. _____

_____

19. How many full-time positions have you held since graduation?

☐ One ☐ Two ☐ Three ☐ More than three

20. What was your starting annual salary range?

☐ 0 - 5,999 ☐ 8,000 - 9,999
☐ 6,000 - 7,999 ☐ 10,000 - 11,999 ☐ 12,000 or more

21. What is your current annual salary range?

☐ 0 - 5,999 ☐ 8,000 - 9,999
☐ 6,000 - 7,999 ☐ 10,000 - 11,999 ☐ 12,000 or more

22. How satisfied are you with the position? (Rate each category by checking the appropriate box.)

	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor
Challenging work	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interesting work	☐	☐	☐	☐
Good relations with colleagues	☐	☐	☐	☐
Opportunity for advancement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Salary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. Which sources of counseling were helpful to you at BCCC?

	Most Helpful	Less Helpful	No Help
Placement Office	☐	☐	☐
Admissions Office	☐	☐	☐
Counseling Center Staff	☐	☐	☐
Financial Aid Office	☐	☐	☐
Academic Advisors	☐	☐	☐
Other (specify):	☐	☐	☐

_____

24. How would you rate the opportunity for involvement in student activities at BCCC?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ No interest

25. Did your program of study at BCCC meet your educational objectives?

☐ Very much so ☐ Partially ☐ Not at all ☐ Do not know

26. To what extent was your program of study compatible with your interests and abilities when you were at BCCC?

☐ Very compatible ☐ Partially ☐ Not at all ☐ Do not know

27. Did your experience at BCCC meet your personal objectives?

☐ Very much so ☐ Partially ☐ Not at all ☐ Do not know

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28. How compatible were your experiences at BCCC with your current interests and abilities?

☐ Very compatible ☐ Partially ☐ Not at all ☐ Do not know

29. Do you plan to continue your education?

☐ Yes; full-time at undergraduate level
☐ Yes; full-time at graduate level
☐ Yes; part-time at undergraduate level
☐ Yes; part-time at graduate level
☐ No

30. Do you have any comments, explanations, or suggestions related to your career preparation or the College in general? (Use the space below for your answer.)

YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE PROVIDED WILL BE VERY VALUABLE TO BCCC.

APPENDIX B

First Covering Letter

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BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NEWTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF
THE PRESIDENT

July, 1972

Dear Alumnus:

Several weeks ago we sent you a questionnaire designed to secure information about your feelings and experiences with the educational programs at Bucks County Community College. Perhaps you meant to respond but have not yet found time. I have enclosed a second copy of the questionnaire in case you misplaced the first.

Completing the questionnaire will take only about ten minutes of your time. We believe it is important to know how alumni feel about their experience at Bucks County Community College if current practice is to be improved. As an alumnus of this institution your experience and insight are invaluable.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. Results will be reported in summary statistics. No individual will be identified in any way.

Your contribution to the success of the study is most important and deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

William H. Feddersen

WILLIAM H. FEDDERSEN
Assistant to President

WHF/nf
7/18/72

APPENDIX C

Second Covering Letter

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BUCKS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
NEWTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 18940

September, 1972

Dear Alumnus:

The Office of Institutional Research is undertaking a study of all graduates of Bucks County Community College. We believe it is important to know how alumni feel about their experience with the educational programs at Bucks if current practice is to be improved.

I hope that as a former student at Bucks you will be willing to share with us your insight and experience. The enclosed questionnaire should take only about ten minutes of your time. We think you may find it interesting.

Pleased be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential. Results will be reported in summary statistics. No individual will be identified in any way.

Your contribution to the success of this study is most important and deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Mahon

Jack Mahon
Administrative Assistant

JM/nf
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